



State of Connecticut COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 2, Hartford, CT 06103

Promoting Equality and Justice for all People

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing –March 8, 2021

CHRO Testimony Regarding

HB 6321 – AAC Adoption and Implementation of the Connecticut Parentage Act

SB 363 – AAC the Duties of the Office of the Attorney General

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, Senator Kissel, Representative Fishbein, and members of the Judiciary Committee, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities appreciates the chance to submit testimony regarding two of the bills before the committee today.

HB 6321 – An Act Concerning Adoption and Implementation of the Connecticut Parentage Act

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities fully supports HB 6321, which updates Connecticut's parentage law in order to safeguard the rights of children and families. This bill makes crucial and overdue changes to Connecticut law to ensure that the child-parent relationship is secure regardless of the marital status, gender or sexual orientation of the parents. As the state entity charged with enforcing Connecticut's antidiscrimination laws - including those regarding marital status, gender, and sexual orientation – the Commission strongly supports this important bill which reflects the diversity of families in our state.

SB 363 – An Act Concerning the Duties of the Office of the Attorney General

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities had concerns with this bill when it was first proposed in 2019. The initial language created significant ambiguity as to the longstanding antidiscrimination complaint process in Connecticut, with much of the authority given to the Office of the Attorney General overlapping the work that the Commission already does under statute. The Commission appreciated the willingness of the Office of the Attorney General to work with it during past sessions on the language now before the Judiciary Committee as SB 363.

The language in SB 363 represents a compromise reached during the 2019 session between the Commission and the Office of the Attorney General that assuaged some of the concerns that the Commission had with that initial language. We agreed to this language with the understanding that the Office of the Attorney General was not interested in litigating individual discrimination claims and that the Attorney General's office would not file cases on complaints already pending before the Commission. We remain concerned that the state could lose the federal funding provided to the Commission by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to process, investigate and litigate these antidiscrimination cases. We also want to be sure that if passed, this bill does not create a duplicative process that would confuse individuals seeking to file a complaint alleging discrimination. The discrimination complaint process in Connecticut was intentionally structured to be easily navigable and understood by all potential parties, including those who are not represented by attorneys. The Commission will continue to work cooperatively with the Attorney General's office to ensure that parties are not confused by a process that is meant to be simple.